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The Great Natural Healer



**Charles
Heber
Clark**

(Max Adeler)

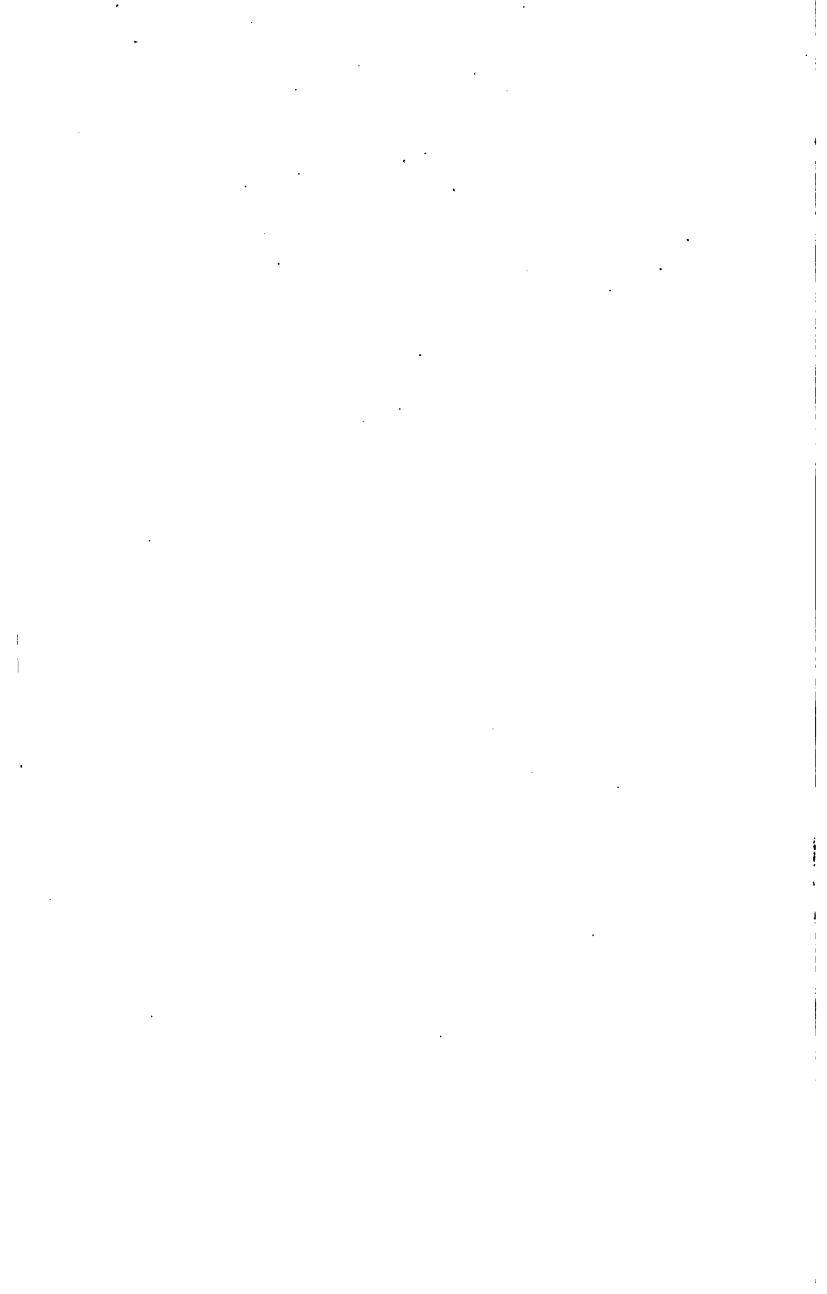
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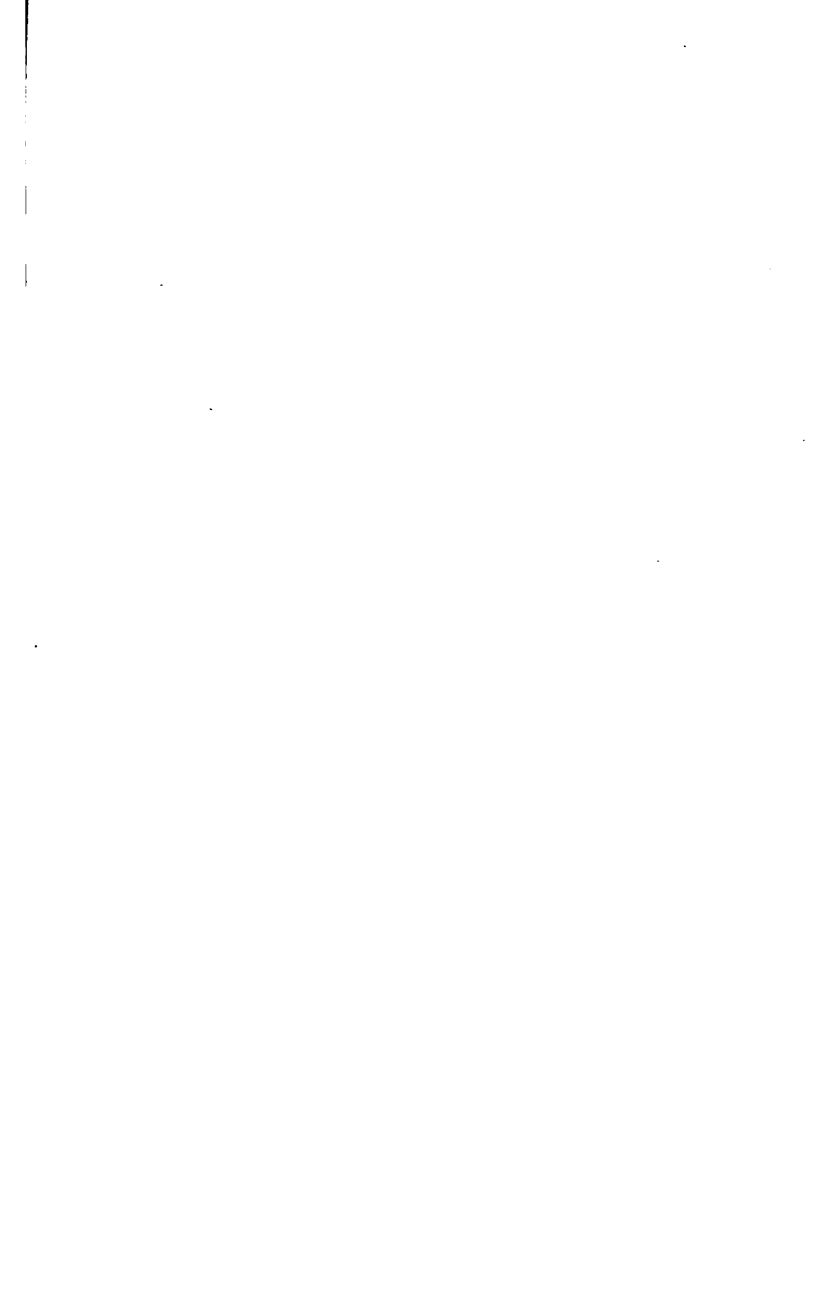


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FROM

Prof. G. L. Kittredge,
Cambridge.







HE GAVE A HOWL OF DELIGHT AND BEGAN TO
CAPER ABOUT THE ROOM

©

The Great Natural Healer

BY
CHARLES HEBER CLARK
(MAX ADELER)

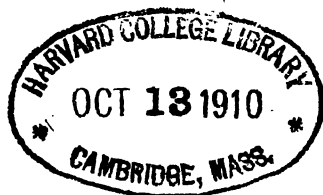
AUTHOR OF
"Out of the Hurly-Burly"



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*Prof. G. L. Kittredge,
Cambridge.*

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THE GREAT NATURAL HEALER

THE man whose chair was next to mine on the deck of the steamer *Arcturus*, as she speeded toward Liverpool, had never been inclined to talk freely when we found ourselves together. He had responded with politeness if a word or two had been addressed to him, but had refrained from saying anything that would have led to further conversation. He was a man of pleasing appearance, with brown hair and beard, and

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with kindly brown eyes looking through gold spectacles. He seemed to me to be about thirty-five years old, and his face made an impression of refinement and intelligence. I should have thought him, at a glance, a man who could talk agreeably and with profit to his hearer.

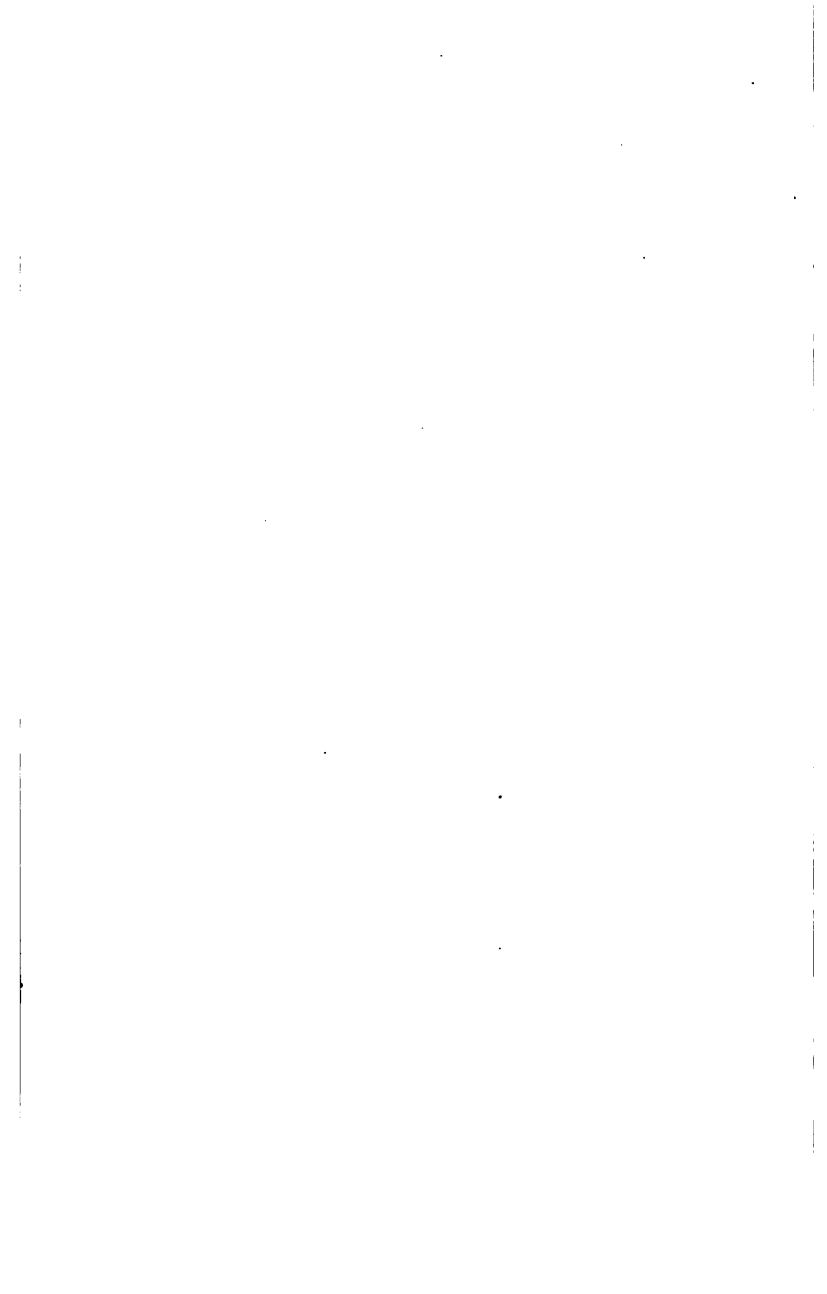
The sea was rough one afternoon, and as we sat side by side watching the tossing waves and the rolling of the ship, I was impelled to say to him:

“I wonder if there really is any remedy for sea-sickness?”

He started, almost as if I had



"I WONDER IF THERE REALLY IS ANY REMEDY
FOR SEA-SICKNESS?"



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struck him. Half raising himself from his recumbent position, he looked at me in a frightened way, and I, thoughtlessly, not knowing precisely what to do or say in such a queer, unexpected situation, asked further:

“You don’t know of one, do you?”

Instead of making answer, the color left his face and he struggled out of his chair and his wraps and dashed toward his deck state-room, which he entered, closing the door.

Of course I thought my words had operated upon his mind by

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suggestion so that he had felt sea-sickness coming on. I was sorry I had alluded to the matter, but I considered that he would have had the attack at any rate, sooner or later, and so I could not feel very culpable.

But an hour afterward I saw him again upon the deck, appearing to be perfectly well, and in a few moments the deck-steward came and removed his chair to the other side of the steamer. Then I felt angry, and I resolved to try to discover in what manner I had given offense to him by making what

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seemed to be an inoffensive observation.

For two days he evaded me, but on the third day I found him hidden in a corner of the smoking-room; I looked him in the face, and said to him:

“I am sorry if I offended you by what I said the other day. Of course, you know, I had no idea that my remark would be disagreeable.”

His eyes were cast downward for a moment and he hesitated to reply. Then he said:

“It was not disagreeable, I assure you. Not that, but—”

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Then he stopped and looked again at the table.

I was about to turn away, when he raised his hand with an appealing gesture, and said:

“You simply frightened me.”

“I did! I frightened you? I don’t at all understand.”

“How could you?” he replied, with a faint smile. “My conduct must have seemed very strange and rude. I should like —” he said, and then his voice and his eyes dropped, and a few seconds elapsed before he spoke again. “I should like to explain the matter to you—to tell you

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my story, if you would care to hear it, and if you would accept it in confidence."

I could not refuse his offer. Besides, my curiosity was strongly aroused. He invited me into the parlor adjoining his state-room, and when he had locked the door and both of us were seated, he said:

"My name is John P. Tadcaster, and I am the victim of misfortune—the most strange and dreadful misfortune. I am, in every fibre of my nature, a truthful man; but as you look at me sitting here, I am incar-

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nate falsehood; yes, a living, walking, miserable mass of deception."

He placed his elbows upon the little table and covered his face with his hands. I thought he would fall to weeping. Recovering himself, he said:

"About a year ago I made up my mind to learn the Spanish language, with the notion that I could enter the consular service of the United States and obtain appointment to one of the South American stations. That I might concentrate my attention upon this study and

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get away from all business and social diversion, I went up to the little town of Borax, in Sullivan County, Pennsylvania. Borax, you may know, but probably you don't know, is away off in the mountains among the hemlock forests, and is really almost as much apart from civilization as if it were in the wilds of Oregon. The people are simple-minded, and usually ignorant, and yet many of them are quite well off, the hemlock-bark industry having brought no little money to the town and the neighborhood. Borax has

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a fairly good hotel, and I had secured a suite of rooms on the second floor, looking right out over the tiny lake. It was an ideal place for study.

“The stage that brought me from the railway station, eleven miles away, reached Borax at four o'clock on Wednesday afternoon. As I stepped from the stage, in front of the hotel, and was about to direct the host to care for my trunk, a man rushed up to me in a condition of excitement and asked:

“‘Are you a doctor?’

“‘What's the matter?’ I asked.

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“That was a fatal response. Why did I not simply say No, and turn away? Alas! if we could foresee the consequences of our words and actions! The man at once concluded that I was a physician, and, seizing my arm, he hurried me around the corner to the porch of a house where a crowd was collected. We pushed through the people, and, gaining the porch, I found a boy of fourteen lying upon the floor with a gash in his head and with his face very pale.

“ ‘He fell off of the porch roof, Doctor,’ said one of the

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bystanders, addressing me, 'and cut his head and broke his leg.'

" 'Why don't you send for a doctor?' I asked. 'You have a doctor in Borax?'

" 'Yes,' was the reply, 'Dr. Bowser; but he went down to Harrisburg yesterday and won't be home till Monday.'

"Without saying more, I had the blood washed from the boy's head, and the hair clipped away, and then I drew the slight cut together and fastened it with some court-plaster. Then I felt the boy's leg. I know absolutely nothing about such things,

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and the leg did not seem to me to be broken. But the boy said it was, and all his friends and all the bystanders said it was, and who was I to disregard such testimony? I sent for two shingles and muslin and tied the leg up in splints as well as I could. I am apt to be feverish when I go into a new country, so I always carry quinine pills with me and I never leave home without paregoric. I felt somewhat uneasy about the boy when the leg was bandaged, and I had an impulse to go to the very end of my resources so as to give

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him all the chances that were within reach. I gave him two quinine pills and a teaspoonful of paregoric, and had him carried home on a plank and put to bed.

“Really, I thought no more about the boy, but turned at once to my studies.

“On Sunday morning, just as I had finished breakfast, Andrews, the landlord, told me that some of my friends wished to see me on the hotel porch. I went out, and there was the wounded boy and Dr. Bowser (who had returned a day sooner

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than he had expected), and half the people in Borax. Three rousing cheers greeted me as I came through the doorway. The boy rushed up and threw his arms about me; his mother kissed me; the man who had called me to the case cried vehemently: 'Hurrah for Doc!' while Dr. Bowser seized my hand and said:

“ ‘Wonderful, Doctor, wonderful! I never saw a cure like it! A broken leg knit and well and sound in four days! Amazing! I congratulate you! If you're going to

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stay in Borax I might as well quit!’

“I hardly knew what to say, but I was resolved to have no misunderstanding of my position, so I exclaimed:

“‘Gentlemen, I am no physician. I assure you I never opened a medical book in my life. I don’t know one bone from another.’

“A perfect howl of derisive laughter expressive of unbelief arose from the crowd. Everybody thought my protest just a bit of fun, or else the impression was that I had resolved to pre-

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tend ignorance so that I could have rest while I stayed at Borax.

“Dr. Bowser laughed more heartily than any of the other Boracians, and, taking me by the hand, he said: ‘It’s of no use, Doctor. Skill like that can’t be disguised. It was masterly.’

“‘I don’t believe the boy’s leg was really broken,’ I said.

“‘Yes, it was, Doc,’ shouted at least a dozen men in the crowd, addressing their answer to Dr. Bowser. ‘I seen it as limp as a wet towel,’ said the man who first summoned me to take the case. ‘The leg was

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broken all to flinders; you could fold it like a two-foot rule.'

" 'Gentlemen,' I said, 'I have come here to study. I am no doctor. I am in blind, blank ignorance of the whole business. I thank you for your kind behavior and your good wishes, but I ask as a favor that you will believe me and will not attempt again while I am in Borax to call me to a case of illness.'

"I could perceive that nobody believed me, not even Dr. Bowser. Everybody laughed,

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and Dr. Bowser said, shaking my hand: 'All right, Doctor. We shall respect your wish to be let alone; but I think you might help out a poor fellow like me if I get into a tight place.'

"I withdrew to my room. Well, well, indeed, had it been for me if I had taken the stage on Monday morning and forever fled from Borax!

"For ten days I had peace, and in the quiet of that lovely neighborhood, in the bracing mountain air, I felt that I could conquer any branch of learning.

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I made wonderful headway with my Spanish, and really the incident to which I have referred had almost passed from my mind.

“But one day Mrs. Andrews, the wife of the man who kept the hotel, knocked upon my chamber door, and when I opened it she said: ‘Doctor, my little girl seems quite ill. Won’t you come down stairs and look at her?’

“I had admired this child, and more than once had taken her upon my knee and fondled her. I said to the mother: ‘Mrs.

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Andrews, I am very, very sorry, but I am not a physician, and it would not be right for me to treat Mary. Why don't you call for Dr. Bowser?'

" 'He has gone across the mountain,' she answered, 'and cannot get back until to-morrow. Please, please come and see Mary. I am afraid she is very sick.'

" 'Mrs. Andrews,' I said, 'if I could help her I should be glad to go, but I cannot. It would be wrong for me to attend her; I might do serious injury.'

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“Mrs. Andrews looked at me with disbelief plainly depicted upon her countenance, and then she began to cry. Imagine my feelings! To have a mother, a respectable woman, regard me as a hard-hearted brute who would not move a step to save the life of her darling little one! You can guess what I suffered. I did not know what more to say, and Mrs. Andrews, with her apron to her face, turned away. I could hear her sobbing all the way down stairs. Then plainly I heard her relate to her husband, in a broken,

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tearful voice, how I had refused to see the child.

“Andrews was angry. He applied to me several revolting expressions; and three or four men who were sitting in the hotel office indicated that they entered fully into the view he took of me.

“‘I’ll go up and see him,’ I heard Andrews say. He came up hurriedly, and three of his friends came with him. His tone lost some of its severity as he presented himself to me.

“‘Doctor,’ he began.

“‘Not doctor, if you please,

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Mr. Andrews; I am not a physician.'

" 'That kind of thing is all very well, Doctor,' he replied, 'when there's nothin' the matter. Ef you want to hide or keep a secret, I'm willin' to help you; but I put it to you as between man and man, is it fair to let a poor little innocent baby suffer because you are up to sumthin'? Hang me ef I think it is.'

" 'Try the man who keeps the drug store,' I said.

" 'Try no man in no drug store!' he answered with scorn

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and anger. 'Not while a big city doctor's in this yer very house. I guess not! Now, will you come and cure that child or won't you come? That's what I want to know. If she dies her blood'll be on your head.'

" 'Yes,' exclaimed Fullerton, the butcher, who had come up stairs with Andrews, 'and there'll be more blood, too. I'll bet you'll see some lynch law in this town.'

" 'I'll get the rope myself,' added Burns, the tax collector. 'See ef I don't.'

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“ ‘Gentlemen,’ I said, ‘on my word of honor I am not a physician, and in my ignorance I may do the child grave harm; but, as you will persist in refusing to believe what I say, I suppose I must see the child. Lead me to her.’ ”

“The poor little one had a high fever and her face was crimson. I hadn’t the least idea what to do. To save my life, I couldn’t remember any of the medicines commonly given to fever patients. But I took out my paregoric bottle, put six drops in a spoon with water,

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and chipped a fragment from a quinine pill and gave it to the child. Then I told her mother to give her as much very cold water as she wanted.

“That was at two o’clock in the afternoon. I went out for my usual walk down the ravine through which the lake found its outlet. The day was so pleasant that I took my book with me and sat for two or three hours by the stream studying. I heard the supper bell ringing as I approached the hotel; but nobody was in the dining-room. There, upon the porch, stood

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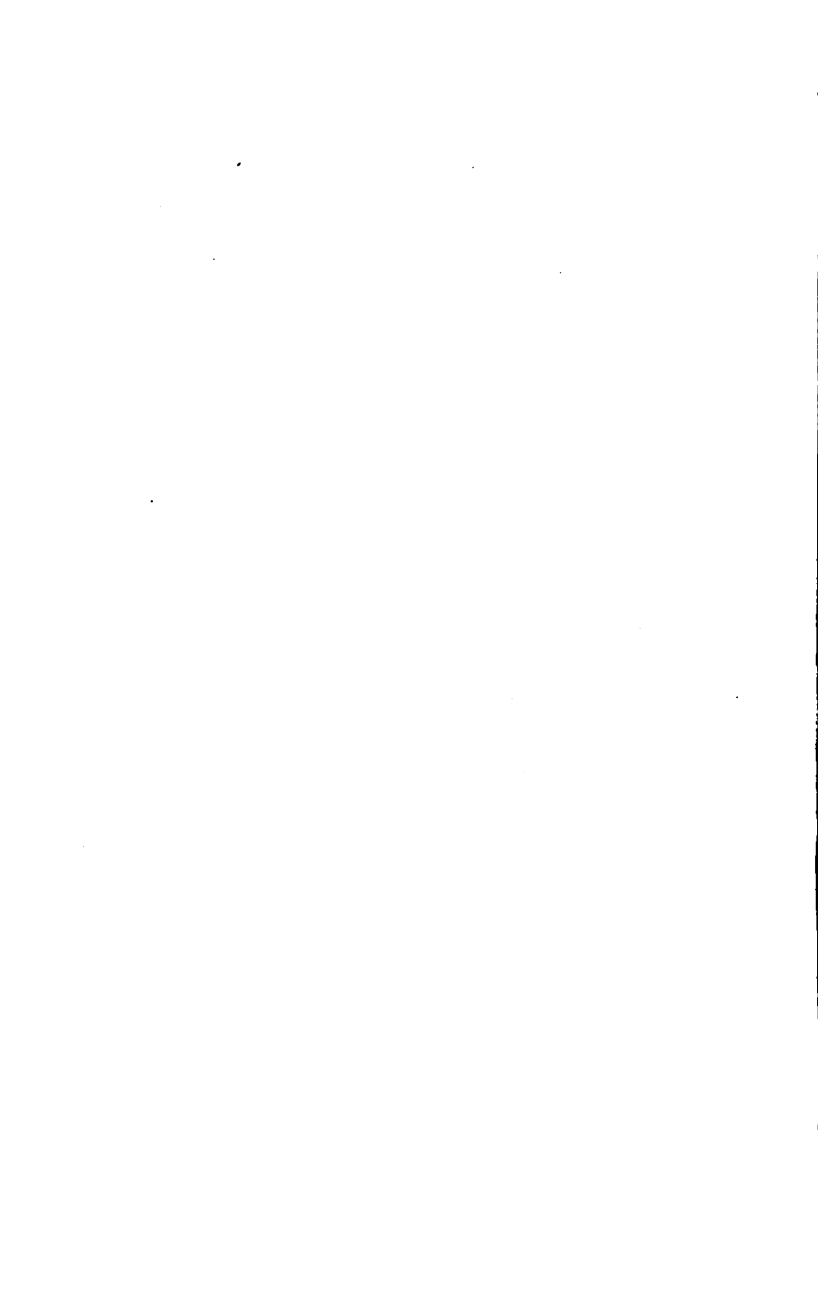
Mrs. Andrews, smiling and holding in her arms the child, from whom every particle of fever had fled, and Andrews and Fullerton and Burns and the waitress and the bartender and the stableman were there with her.

“They gave a shout as I appeared, and Andrews, coming toward me and clasping my hand, said:

“ ‘Doctor, I don’t understand your way of behavin’, but sure and certain you’ve got hold of doctorin’ by the right end; the baby’s well.’



"YOU'VE GOT HOLD OF DOCTORIN' BY THE RIGHT END"



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“ ‘Well?’ I exclaimed.

“ ‘Perfectly,’ said Mrs. Andrews. ‘The fever stopped ten minutes after you gave her that wonderful medicine. Feel her pulse.’

“ ‘I couldn’t tell anything about it,’ I said, ‘if I should feel her pulse. It was the cold water that cured her.’

“ ‘Everybody, from Andrews down to the stableman, roared with laughter, and then Andrews said:

“ ‘Doctor, I don’t care how queer you behave, all I got to say is that you kin stay in this

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yer house board free s' long as you've a mind to. It's magic!'

" 'He's just a Great Natural Healer,' said Burns.

"I had to kiss the child, who certainly looked well, and then we passed into the supper-room.

"Borax fairly rang with the report of this marvelous cure, and the hotel office was crowded all the evening with people who discussed it. My popularity was so great that I could not venture out upon the porch without having a dozen or two men coming up to have

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the honor of shaking hands with me.

“On the next Saturday night, while I was standing in the office the stage drove up and a woman got out and called for some one to help her boy to descend. The boy was about twelve years old, and he was so ill that Andrews had to carry him into the house.

“‘Here’s another chance for you, Doctor,’ the landlord said as he passed me.

“‘No,’ I answered; ‘if the boy’s sick send for Dr. Bowser.’

“The mother, Mrs. Collins,

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was quite willing to do so, but of course Bowser was away—he was always away; and so, unless I wanted to be regarded as an inhuman monster, I simply *had* to go to attend the patient. From the way Geordie (they called him Geordie) looked I was sure he would be dead before morning anyhow, and though I hadn't the least notion whether his malady was typhoid fever or measles, I gave him one quinine pill and a teaspoonful of paregoric, as usual. Can you blame me? What would you have done? They were the

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only medicines I knew about, and I thought they were harmless.

“You will hardly believe me; but after leaving the boy I hadn’t got to the bottom of the stairs before I heard exclamations of joy, and—well, to make the story short, Geordie sat up in half an hour, and at dinner next day he ate enough to satisfy three ordinary boys. I never knew whether he had over-eaten himself or was just shamming. Anyhow, Dr. Bowser came round that same evening and asked me to go with him to his office.

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"When we got there, he offered me a cigar and said:

" 'Do you know you've got all Sullivan County wild about you? The cure of that Collins boy yesterday was the most wonderful thing I ever saw.'

"The boy, he said, had some frightful malady—I never could remember the names of those things, and Bowser said he'd as soon think of trying to cure the worst case of leprosy.

" 'Old man,' he said, 'what is your secret? Haven't any? Why, it's almost supernatural!

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If I had your power I'd soon be the richest man in the county. I wish you'd go into partnership with me.'

"Again, with deep solemnity of manner, I explained to Bowser that he and his neighbors were mistaken; that I had never studied medicine.

" 'O, come now,' he said, with a smile. 'You can't keep that up with me. What is your full name?'

" 'John P. Tadcaster,' I said.

" 'Just so,' answered Dr. Bowser, blithely rising and taking from the mantel a Physi-

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cians' Directory. Turning over the leaves, he handed the book to me and pointed to a name on one of the pages. Will you believe me? There was the name of John P. Tadcaster, and the information that he graduated from the Medical School of the University of Susquehanna in 1894.

“‘So it's of no use,’ said Bowser, ‘to try to hide the facts any longer,’ and he laughed.

“I made up my mind then and there that I should leave Borax at the end of the week. I had supposed that there was



THERE WAS THE NAME, JOHN P. TADCASTER

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not another John P. Tadcaster on the rolling globe, and I knew it would be useless now to try to induce the people of Borax to believe the truth.

“The next day Andrews came up to my room while I was in the midst of hard study, and said there was a man down stairs who wanted to see me. I refused to be seen, but in fact the impudent fellow was standing behind Andrews, and he pushed right into the room and shut the door behind him, locking it.

“‘My wife,’ he said, ‘has

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blood-pisinin', and I want you to cure her.'

" 'I wish you would go away,' I said angrily. 'Call Dr. Bowser. How dare you come into my room in this manner and tell me what you want!'

" 'Never mind about no Bowser,' he answered. 'Never mind about him or no other doctor. My wife's like to die, and I'll have you or nobody. I know your tricks, and I'm ready for you.'

" 'Tricks,' I said, 'tricks, you villain!'

" 'Well, call 'em what you've



“HERE’S A PISTOL ’LL BLOW YOUR BRAINS
OUT EF YOU DON’T”

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a mind to; I don't care. Only I'll stand no foolin'. You write me out a perscription and there's five dollars, and here's a pistol 'll blow your brains out ef you don't do it,' and he actually presented a revolver to my head.

“Consider now, my friend, the situation I was in! I didn't know if the ruffian was insane. It was hardly an occasion for tranquil reflection. I took up a pen, and, first writing a vigorous protest which I proposed to lodge with Andrews lest I should be prosecuted for mal-

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practice, I dashed off the following pretended prescription and handed it to the man:

R De gustu' his
Non est
Disputandum

In other words, *De gustibus non est disputandum*. My handwriting is so crabbed that the thing really looked a little like a pre-

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scription. The man took it and laid upon my table five dollars, which I crumpled up into a pellet and flung at his head. He went away.

“That night I went over to Perkins’s drug store and found the clerk there alone.

“‘Was there a man in here to-day,’ I asked, ‘with a prescription written by me?’

“‘Yes, Doctor,’ he said.

“‘What did you do with it?’

“‘Filled it, of course.’

“‘Filled it! You didn’t try to fill it, did you?’

“‘Why, certainly,’ said the

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youth, smiling. 'That's what prescriptions are for, isn't it?'

"I sat down upon the chair by the soda fountain. I felt faint.

"'Were there any poisons in the medicine?' I asked.

"'You ought to know,' he said. 'Two or three, I think; but not enough to kill. But, anyhow, what's the odds? Mrs. McGuire is well.'

"'What Mrs. McGuire?'

"'The woman you wrote the prescription for. She is going to a picnic in the morning. Says she never felt so well in her life.

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McGuire says you're the doctor for his money, 's long 's you stay here.'

"Well, I went back to my studies, hoping that I had heard the last of this nonsense; but I might have known better. Really, it is wonderful how swiftly rumor flies in a country like that, where there are no newspapers to carry information. Within a week invalids flocked to Borax in such numbers that two more stages were put upon the line, and Andrews hadn't a vacant room in his house. He began to draw plans for a

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new wing, and I could not move from my room without being solicited to perform a cure.

“One scoundrel, from Purgatory Springs, hobbled about after me on crutches, and insisted upon telling me that he had been crippled for twenty years and had taken tons of medicine. I evaded him for several days; but one morning he caught me as I went into the office for my mail, and he asked me if I wouldn't just put my hand on his lame leg above the knee. I was born good-natured, and like a fool I granted his request. A moment

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later he gave a howl of delight, tossed his crutches over in the corner and began to caper about the room. Then he projected himself at me with a manifest purpose to embrace me, but I dodged him, flew up stairs and locked myself in my room.

“Do you suppose that man had really been lame? I don’t know. I doubt it. I had my suspicions of Andrews at the time, but how could I prove anything?

“However, I made up my mind to leave Borax and I notified Andrews to retain a seat in

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the stage for me on the following Saturday; but he did not do it. I could never find out exactly how the thing was worked, but you could see with your own eyes three stages arrive at Borax every afternoon and nobody ever saw one go away. Conspiracy, you say? Very likely. And so I sent out and tried to hire a wagon to take me away; but there was not a man in the neighborhood who would consent to perform the service for me.

“I resolved that I would leave if I had to walk, but I did dislike

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to make the journey on foot, over bad mountain roads, and then I could not bring myself easily to consent to abandon my trunk.

“That woman Collins and her boy still remained at the hotel, and Mrs. Collins used to look at me in a most trying manner while we sat at the table in the dining-room. I couldn’t make her out for a while. She looked stupid, but for all I could tell she might develop low cunning. Anyhow, I merely nodded to her as we passed, treating her with coldness, perhaps with disdain.

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“On the Saturday I had arranged to leave Borax, I was sitting in my room trying to learn a Spanish vocabulary, when I heard a woman’s screams. For a moment I was startled, but I have presence of mind, so I checked my curiosity and merely locked the door.

“For an hour or more there was hubbub and excitement down stairs, but I remained calm. Then there was a knock upon the door. I did not answer. Then I heard Dr. Bowser’s voice calling me. I unlocked the door and opened it a crack.

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“ ‘Busy, are you?’ asked Bowser.

“ ‘Yes, very busy. What’s the matter?’

“ ‘Oh, nothing; nothing much. Only I thought you might care to know that poor little Geordie Collins has passed away.’

“ ‘Dead?’

“ ‘Dead. He dropped right over out by the pump just after eating some damson plums, and life was extinct before I could get to him.’

“ ‘Is the boy really dead?’ I asked.

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“‘Absolutely and conclusively dead,’ said Bowser solemnly and with strong emphasis. ‘I think I ought to know when a boy is dead, oughtn’t I? I’m no great doctor like you, but I’m not just a mere chump. I tell you the boy breathed his last at 9.34 this very morning.’

“I am sure that I am not a cruel man, or a hard-hearted man; I am not even ungenerous; but (I am half ashamed to tell it) a feeling of deep, pure joy thrilled my soul when I learned that Geordie was beyond my reach. Under the circumstances

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it would have been indecent, would it not, in spite of my repugnance for his mother, if I had refrained from every manifestation of feeling? I went down stairs with Bowser, who seemed to be crying. Do I doubt that he was crying? I can hardly tell. But, anyhow, there in the parlor lay poor Geordie, cold and white and still, on the red cushion of the settee, and Mrs. Collins knelt beside him, moaning and weeping and wringing her hands. All the invalids of the hotel were in the room or at the door, and three-

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quarters of the people of Borax were in the office, or on the porch, or looking in at the windows.

“I had a shiver of apprehension as I came into the room; but what can you do with a boy that has had his vital spark completely quenched? I went up to the sofa and looked down upon the calm, still face, white as marble, and then I felt sorry I had had such wicked feelings about the child. My heart began to ache for the mother, too. I said to her that she must try to bear up and be patient; that

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Geordie was happier now than if he were with us, and that he wouldn't be willing to come back to us if he could.

"Then I took the boy's hand in mine and leaned over him to kiss him.

"Imagine my feelings as I saw his eyes open! Then he sneezed twice, sat straight up on the red cushion, said, 'Where's Ma?' and then flung his arms about his mother's neck.

"What would you have thought of that, my friend? Was the boy cataleptic, or had his scandalous old mother mesmer-

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ized him, or was Geordie just up to some kind of game with me, or had Bowser drugged him? I can't tell. But no matter; there was Geordie risen right from the dead, everybody thought, and the people—well, I know you won't expect me even to try to tell of the excitement that ensued. Borax was just crazy, and I felt the iron fingers of Fate closing around me. I knew I should never get away from that disgusting town unless by stealth. I was hardly safe in my room, but the locked door did protect me for a time.

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“Food, however, is a necessity. I would not go down to dinner. I rang for it to be brought to me. Andrews brought it himself, and after depositing the tray upon the table and looking out of my window to see how the new wing would fit to the north end of the hotel, he said:

“‘Doc, I have an offer for you.’

“‘Andrews,’ I said, ‘please withdraw. I am not open to offers.’

“‘But you wouldn’t be impolite to a lady, would you?

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You're not that kind of a man, unless I'm wrong in my calculations.'

"'To what lady do you refer?'

"'To the Widder Collins, little Geordie's ma. She has designated me to say to you that she has two good farms over in Loyalsock Township, five hundred dollars in bank, and a first mortgage on the new Methodist Church at Huckleberry Bend, and ef you're willin' to marry her, she's willin' and so's Geordie.'

"My friend, could you, without reflection, have framed a

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reply to such an extraordinary proposition? I couldn't, and so the delay gave Andrews time to remark:

“‘Ef you don't mind marryin' a widder, I'd advise you to take that offer. She's a woman that's calc'lated to make home happy.’

“The time had now come for action. I must fly. But how? I sat up most of the night meditating upon a plan of escape, and before morning dawned I thought I had one prepared. I had resolved to bribe one of the stage-drivers to take me away while Borax slept.

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“But a better chance presented itself that very day. Dr. Bowser came over to see me about nine o’clock, and when he had made himself at home in the rocking-chair in my room, he cleared his throat a couple of times and, looking timidly at me, he said:

“‘Things are not even in this world, are they?’

“I was not willing to commit myself until I could find out what he was after, so I did not answer.

“‘A country doctor,’ he continued, ‘has a hard life, driving

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here and there, miles and miles, up hill and down dale, night and day, and half the time getting no pay or taking his pay in poultry and horse-feed. And yet here other people just have money chucked at them—fairly chucked at them by Fortune.'

" 'Bowser,' I asked, 'what are you driving at?'

" 'Oh, well,' he said gloomily, 'it's no use of talking to you, of course; but while I can hardly get bread, no matter how much I try, and no matter if I work myself to death, here's big money lying right in your hands

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and you won't even take the trouble to shut your fingers over it.'

" 'Dr. Bowser,' I said sternly, 'I've told you over and over again that I am not a physician, and that it would be wicked, simply a bare-faced fraud, for me to permit these foolish people about here to think me one.'

"He looked at me wearily, his face plainly indicating that he still did not believe me; then he said:

" 'Doctor or no doctor, nobody can deny that I am a doctor. I'll tell you what I'll do.

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You agree to work with me, and let me attend to the scientific end, while you just stand by and look on, and I'll give you two-thirds of the receipts, and I'll get rich on the other third.'

"I was about to refuse this proposition upon the ground that I could not consent to become a party to a dishonorable arrangement, when he continued:

" 'I've got a patient, old Mrs. Brown, over here at Scipio, who will die sure under my treatment. She's rich, too, and if we could cure her—'

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“I saw at once that if I could reach Scipio in Bowser’s carriage, I should have a chance to get away.

“‘I will visit Mrs. Brown with you,’ I said.

“‘You will!’ shouted Bowser, jumping up with such violence that he upset the rocking-chair. ‘Hooray! Doctor, I knew your heart was right. When shall we go?’

“‘Now,’ I said.

“He went out to get his horse. I put into an envelope that I placed upon the table the sum that I owed Andrews

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for board; then I packed as much of my clothing as I could get into a hand-bag, and sat down to wait for Bowser.

“We went down stairs together, and as we passed through the office Andrews looked at me and my valise suspiciously. But Bowser explained the matter to him, and he seemed much relieved. Looking around as I took my seat in the buggy, I saw Mrs. Collins waving her handkerchief at me from the parlor window, while Geordie tried to climb one of the posts of the porch. I never saw a

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boy of his years who presented a more vigorous appearance.

“We reached Scipio at half-past eleven o’clock, and Bowser tied his horse in front of Mrs. Brown’s house. J. Manderson Brown, her son, opened the door for us. He looked grave. Bowser introduced me, and Mr. Brown said in a low voice, as his countenance overspread with hopefulness:

“‘Thank you, sir; I have heard much of you.’

“Of course, as you may imagine, I couldn’t do an earthly thing for poor Mrs.

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Brown, but Bowser insisted that I must act as if I were treating her; so I gave her nine drops of paregoric in sugar and water, and left sixteen quinine pills with directions that she should take one every four hours.

“The dear old lady looked gratefully at me as I stood by her bedside, and when I bade her good-by she told me she felt better already. Bowser said to young Brown, down stairs, that he thought now the promise was distinct for recovery.

“But how should I contrive

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to get away from Bowser? I asked him if he would mind driving about a little bit so that I could see the town, and he said he would be glad to show Scipio to me. We drove and drove until at last I saw a drug store, and, as good fortune would have it, the store was right across the street from the railway station.

“I asked Bowser to hitch his horse while I bought some medicine. We spent an hour in the drug store, but no train came, and Bowser at last proposed to start for home. I

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thought I heard a train coming, and I went to the front door; but it was a freight train and it did not stop. Then I actually saw a passenger train approaching from the opposite direction, and I asked Bowser if he would mind going around to the grocery store and getting some crackers for me, while I looked up something in the Pharmacopoeia that lay upon the druggist's counter.

“Bowser went upon the errand, and no sooner had he turned the corner than I went out, took my valise from the

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buggy, dashed over to the station and entered a car. The train started at once and I felt half ashamed of myself as I looked through the window and saw poor old Bowser slowly coming back to the drug store with the bundle of crackers in his hand and his head bent downward. No doubt he was thinking how rich he would be by that time next year. But you can't blame me, can you, for running away somehow or other?

“You would naturally think that would be the end of my

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story; but it isn't. Just six months afterwards I was sitting in my library at home when the servant brought me a card. It had on it the name 'J. Manderson Brown.' I was really scared. But the man had run me down. I couldn't get away. And was I to be bluffed and bull-dozed in my own house? No, sir! So I went down into the parlor to see him. To my astonishment he greeted me warmly, clasping my hand and even manifesting some emotion.

" 'Doctor,' he said, as he resumed his seat upon the sofa,

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‘I owe you more than I can ever hope to tell you.’

“ ‘Your mother, then, fully recovered?’

“ ‘Poor mother is dead.’

“ ‘I am very sorry!’ I said; ‘but what then is the—?’

“ ‘I will explain. Your medicine acted like magic. Her system responded instantly to your treatment, and in less than a week she was about the house and as well as she had ever been. In fact, better; she really seemed to have renewed her youth. She ascribed it all to you, and words cannot convey a notion of her

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gratitude. She longed to see you and tell you what her feeling for you was. But, alas, three or four months later another malady assailed her, and as you had disappeared in a mysterious manner, leaving no traces of your whereabouts, she did not have proper treatment from that man Bowser and so she died.'

" 'You wrong poor Bowser,' I said.

" 'No; he means well, but he is dull, while you! O, well, you simply have genius, wonderful, wonderful genius!

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“‘And now,’ continued Brown, ‘my mother was a woman whose gratitude never expressed itself in barren language. She re-wrote her will after her life was saved by you and she left you twenty thousand dollars. I have it with me here,’ and Brown presented a swollen wallet.

“‘I won’t take a dollar of it,’ I said calmly.

“‘What?’ he exclaimed, as the blood flushed his face.

“‘I should be a swindler if I took your mother’s money,’ I said. ‘I am no physician and I

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never did her a particle of good. It was all humbug.'

"The man seemed stunned for a moment. Then he got up and walked about. Resuming his seat, he said:

" 'You must take this money.'

" 'I won't do it.'

" 'I heard that you were queer,' he said, 'and that you would insist that you are no doctor; and as I never met a man of that kind before, I just give up trying to understand you; but there's one thing I can understand,' and he shook the wallet angrily at me. 'Yes,

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sir, I can understand one thing, and that is, you can't insult the memory of my dead mother!'

" 'Far, far be it from me, Mr. Brown,' I said, 'to think of such a thing.'

" 'Very well, then,' he exclaimed, 'you take the legacy; her dying request almost was that I should put the money in your hands. Now you take it, or there's going to be trouble.'

" 'What kind of trouble?' I asked.

" 'Why,' he said, 'I'll prosecute you. I'm under bonds as the executor of my mother's

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estate to see to it that her wishes are fulfilled, and I'm going to do my duty, no matter who has to suffer.'

" 'But,' I said, 'you can't punish a man for refusing to accept money. You can't put him into prison for such a thing as that.'

" 'Yes, you can,' answered Brown. 'It is felony. I knew of a man once in New Jersey who was sent to jail for ten years because he wouldn't take a legacy left him by his aunt. I'd have made it twenty years.'

" 'That seems a little bit

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hard, too, doesn't it?' I suggested.

" 'Not hard,' responded Brown sternly, 'when a man sets himself up to say what another person shall do with her money and tries to block the wheels of justice—not at all hard. But I don't want to resort to extreme measures. I'd hate to have you hauled into court. I ask you to take this money as a favor to my sainted mother.'

"What would you have done, sir, under such perplexing circumstances? I consented to

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take the money on condition that in signing a receipt I should protest in writing that I am no doctor, and that I accepted the bequest under compulsion. Brown was satisfied, and when our business was ended he shook hands with me and left.

“I could not feel sure that I should ever find peace and an uninterrupted opportunity to study the Spanish language so long as I remained at home. I determined to go to Europe and to hide myself somewhere amid the mountains of Switzerland

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for a few years. I thank you for listening to me. It has lightened my burden to tell you the story of the persecution I have endured."

Tadcaster and I arose, and together we passed out of the parlor. As we did so, I saw the deck-steward point him out to Dr. Mullen, the ship's surgeon, who seemed to have been inquiring for Tadcaster.

A smile overspread Mullen's countenance as, with both hands extended, he stepped briskly forward, and, greeting my companion, said:

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“Have I the honor to address the great Dr. Tadcaster?”

Tadcaster did not hesitate. He plunged into his state-room and closed the door.

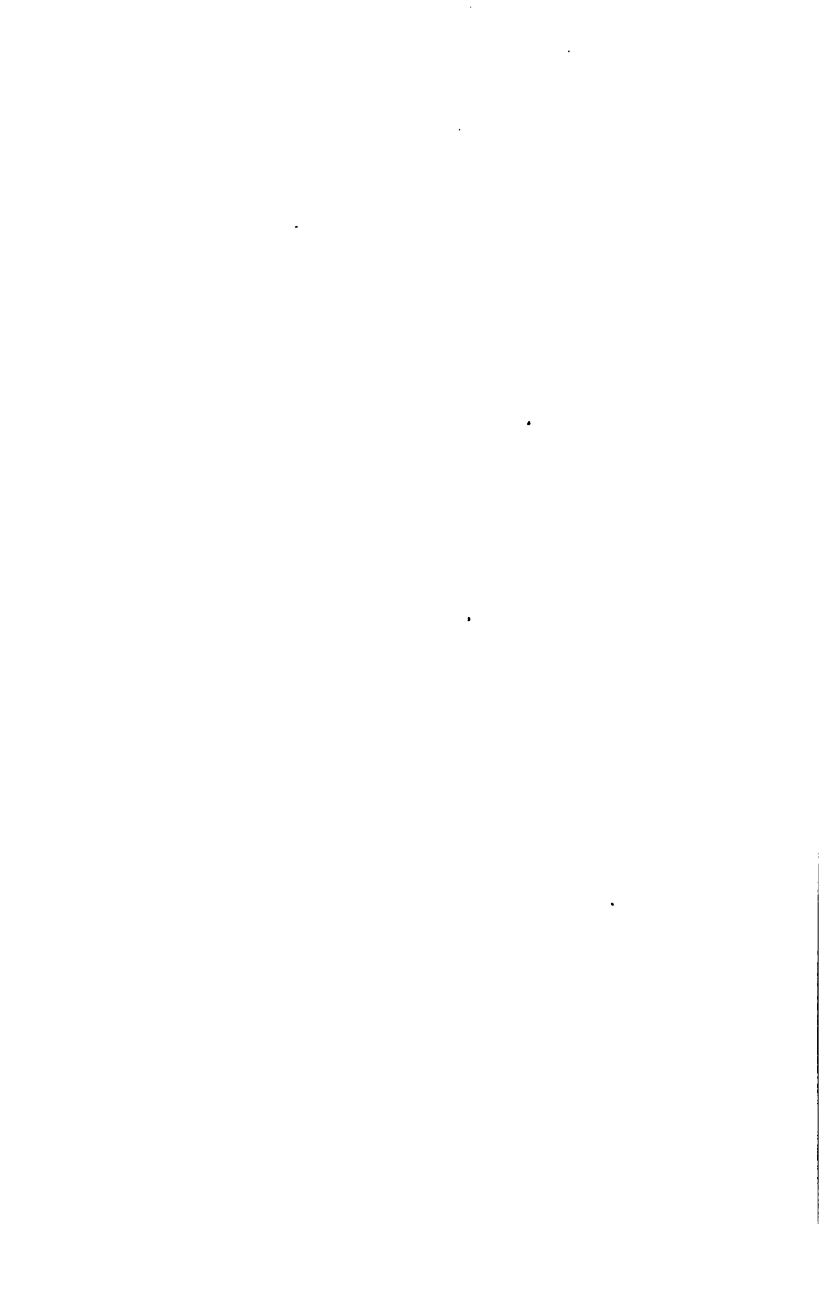
I never saw him again, unless he was the man with a clean-shaven face and a slouched hat over his eyes whom I saw at Liverpool, dressed in shabby clothes, creeping out of the ship over the steerage passengers' gangway. The man was built like Tadcaster, but it may have been some other person.

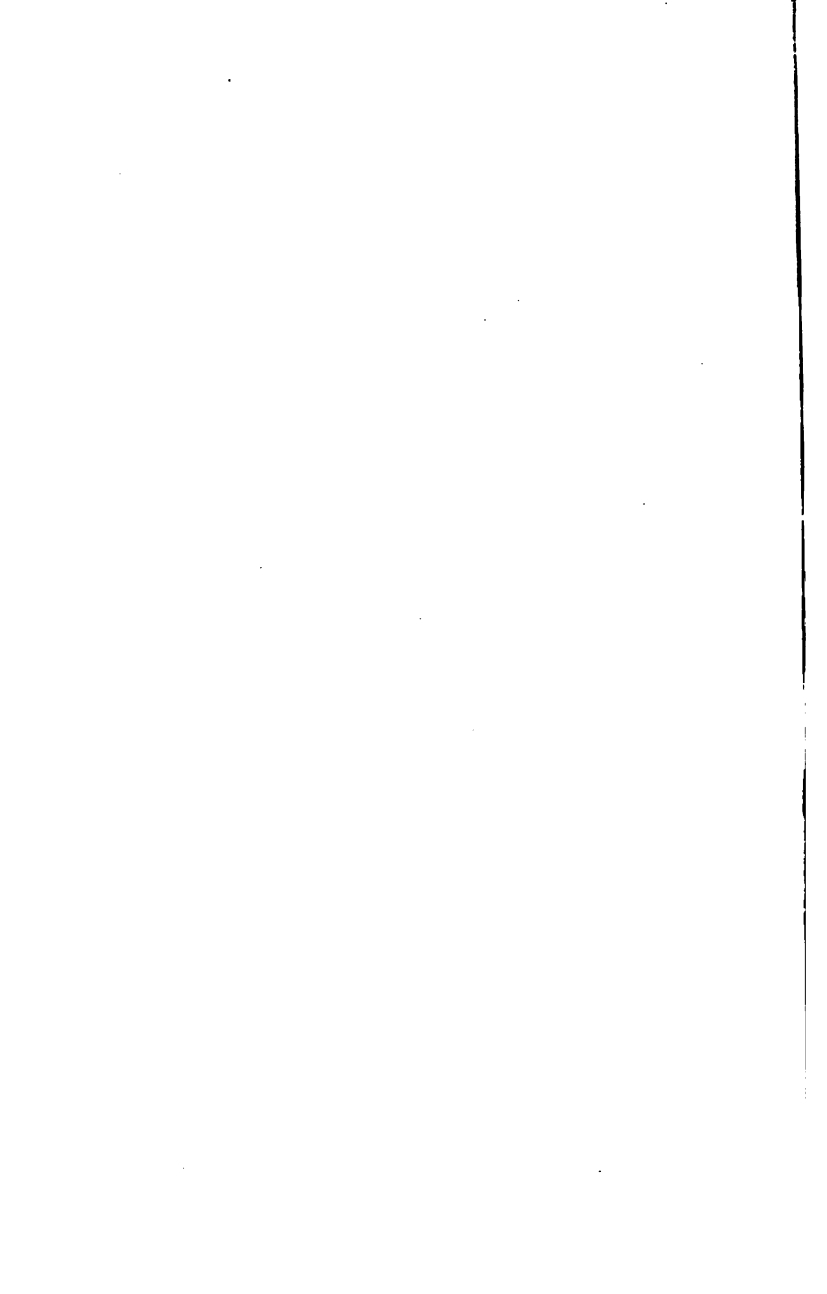
I am going to Borax some day to look up the facts for

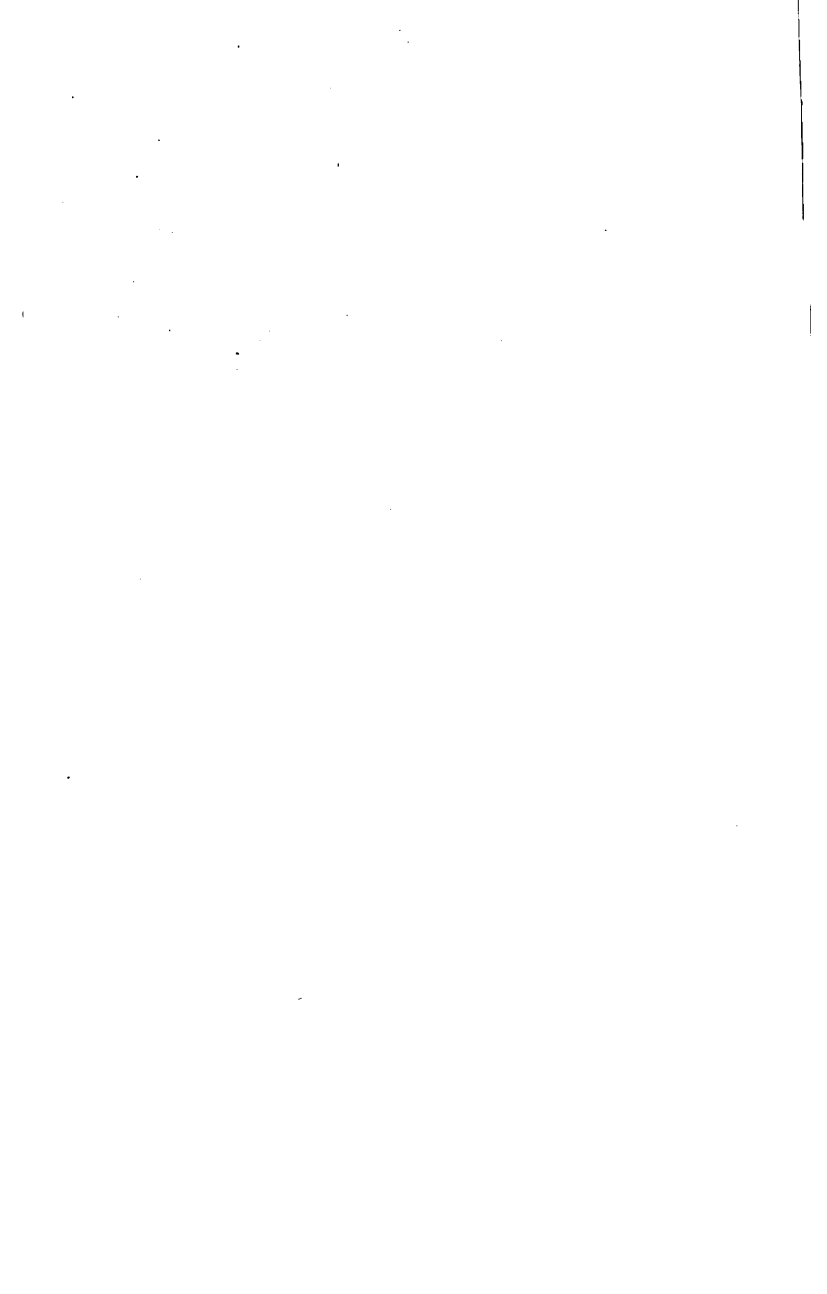
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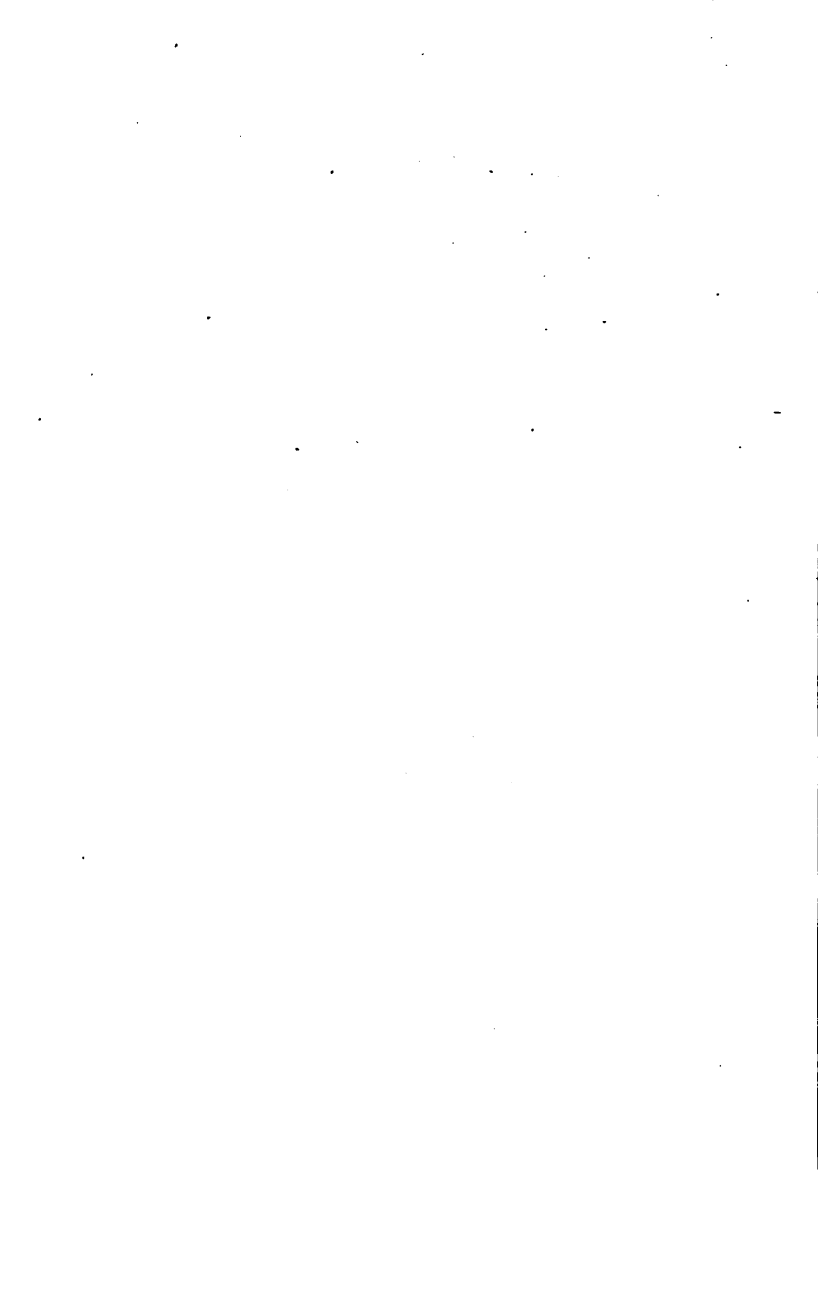
myself. I feel that this story will not have a satisfying conclusion unless I can report that Dr. Bowser has married the Widow Collins and adopted Geordie.

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